

"The Smithsonian Institution"

from Wm Sharswood.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

BEFORE

THE SOCIETY OF THE ALUMNI,

ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR

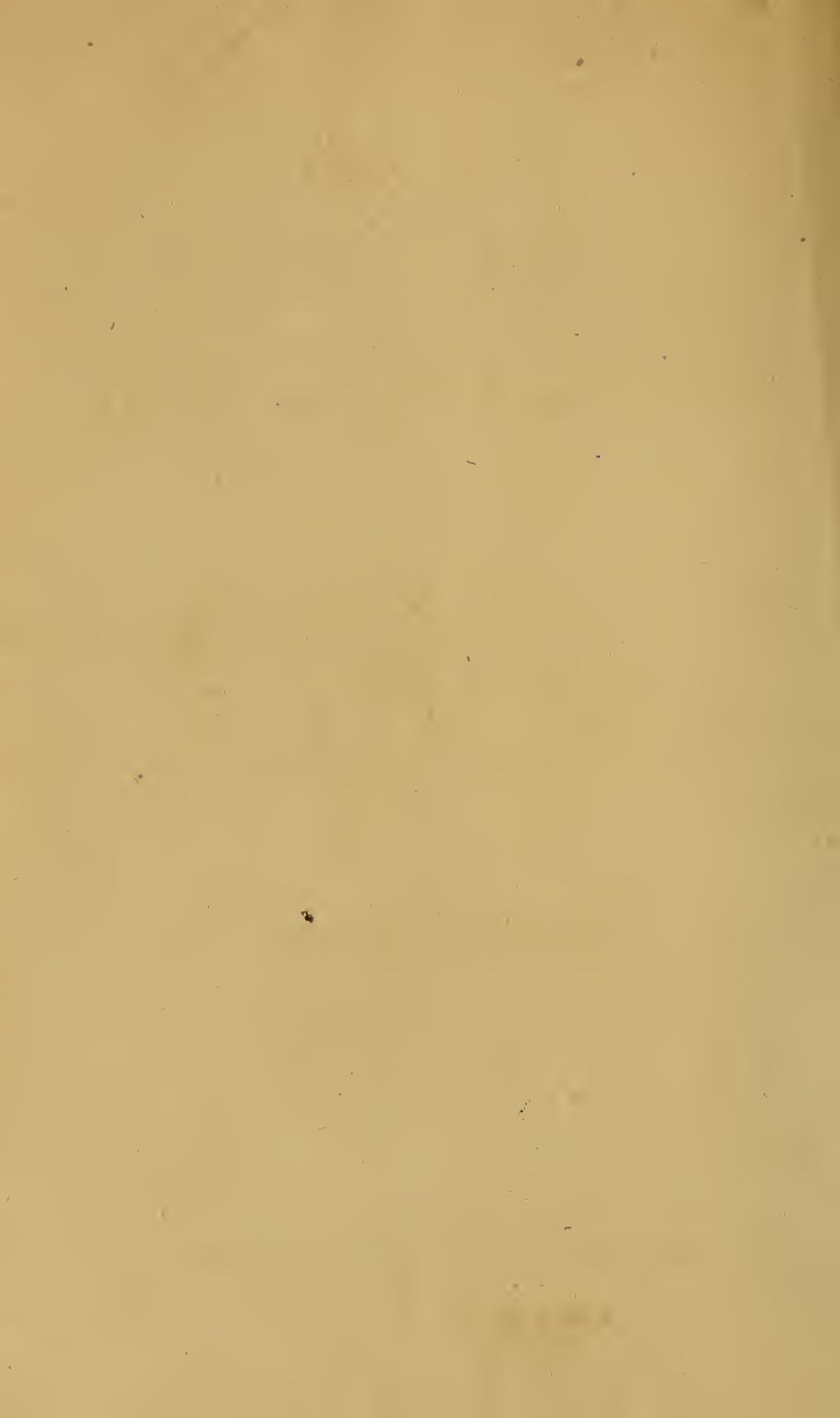
ANNUAL CELEBRATION, DECEMBER 10th, 1856,

BY

THE HON. GEORGE SHARSWOOD, LL.D.

PHILADELPHIA:
KING & BAIRD, PRINTERS, No. 9 SANSON STREET.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

Philadelphia, December 19, 1856.

HON. GEORGE SHARSWOOD,

DEAR SIR :

The Undersigned, a Committee of the Board of Managers of the Society of the Alumni of the University of Pennsylvania, in behalf of the said Society, take great pleasure in requesting of you a copy of the excellent address, delivered by you on the occasion of the late Anniversary of the said Society, for publication.

Yours very respectfully,

VINCENT L. BRADFORD,

H. D. GREGORY,

JOHN M. COLLINS,

G. HERMAN ROBINETT,

WM. ROTCH WISTER.

Philadelphia, March 9, 1857.

GENTLEMEN :

I consider the Address delivered before the Society of the Alumni as their property, and accordingly send you herewith the copy.

Allow me to return you my thanks for the complimentary manner in which you have communicated this request.

Very truly yours,

GEO. SHARSWOOD.

TO MESSRS. VINCENT L. BRADFORD, H. D. GREGORY, JOHN M. COLLINS,
G. HERMAN ROBINETT, W. ROTCH WISTER, *Committee.*

ADDRESS.

AN anniversary celebration of the foundation of a college or university is an homage publicly paid to Learning. It has moreover other high and useful ends. The Alumni come together from the business and conflicts of active life, to bear an earnest and solemn testimony to their younger brethren, who have succeeded them, to the incalculable benefits derived from a collegiate education. They come to warn them that these are the golden hours of their lives—that here are to be formed the habits of study and principles of conduct, which make or mar the man. They come to urge upon them, by the most impressive of all appeals—that which is the voice of personal experience—not to slight the opportunities, which are here presented to them, by the diligent use of which they will be able to make the best preparation for a life, useful to those who, in the order of Providence, may be dependent upon them, to their country and to their fellow-men.

Nor is this all. They come to commune with the past—to revive the recollections of men and scenes, the retrospect of which softens and improves the heart—to brighten the chains of early friend-

ship, the links of which contract rust by time and separation—and to offer an annual tribute, however humble, to the cause of sound education.

To the individual who addresses you, the memories of his college course are among the most delightful of his life. It would be a pleasure to him to recall and dwell upon the characters of his college friends and companions, to trace their history and fortunes, and point with pride to many who have lived to gain distinction in various walks of usefulness. As to some, indeed, it would only be to weave a chaplet for their tombs. “After life’s fitful fever, they sleep well”—to them as indeed to the longest liver, a short, uneasy paroxysm, and then—the calm repose of death. But he feels that such a record would be out of place, presented to those who have not the same associations to invest it with interest.

Of the venerated and beloved men, who formed at that time the faculty of Arts, he has a right to speak with more freedom. He addresses many, who enjoyed the benefit of their example and instructions. Their lives and characters form a part of the history of this University. The grave has now closed over them all, and consecrated the memory of their virtues in the hearts of their pupils and friends.

James G. Thomson, the Professor of Languages, was born in the year 1777, at Newark, in Delaware,

where his father, William Thomson, was the principal of an academy long distinguished for the men of eminence, whom it had trained and sent forth, prior to the American Revolution, and which has since expanded into a college. Here he received the rudiments of his education under the parental eye. In the year 1794, William Thomson was elected to and accepted the post of Professor of the Languages and Principal of the Grammar School of Dickinson College, at Carlisle. The first incumbent of that chair was James Ross, who occupied it from the organization of the college, in 1784, until 1792. After retiring from it, and during the vacancy which succeeded, Mr. Ross was engaged as a private teacher at Carlisle. The advent of Mr. Thomson to that place was the signal for the removal of Mr. Ross; and it is related that when asked the reason of his change of residence, he remarked that he "had to contend with boy teachers previously, but now that a man teacher had come, there was no room for him." Mr. Ross was long a resident of this city, and justly eminent among its classical teachers. He was the author of a Latin Grammar of note, an Accidence, and some other school books. Here he died at an advanced age; and his remains were, at a subsequent period, removed to Carlisle, where they now repose near the dust of Nisbet, the first President of Dickinson. In 1804, William Thomson was called to the chair of

Humanity in the College of New Jersey, at Princeton; but his son, the subject of the present notice, graduated at Dickinson, while his father remained there, in the year 1797. Among his fellow collegiates, though not in the same class, was the present venerated Chief Justice of the United States, one of the most distinguished foster-sons of that institution.* In the following year, at the age of twenty-one, young Thomson came to Philadelphia, literally to seek his fortune; for he used to relate himself, that when he crossed Market Street Bridge, all he possessed in the world was a trunk of clothes and five dollars in money. He brought with him, however, a letter of introduction from Dr. Nesbit to Mr. James Davidson, then Professor of Languages in this University, and at the same time Principal of the Grammar School, whose daughter he subsequently married. Through Mr. Davidson's influence he was engaged as assistant in the Grammar School, from which situation he was soon transferred to the post of Principal of the Friends' Academy in this city. The duties of that place he continued to fulfil with growing reputation, until, in 1806, upon the resignation of Mr. Davidson, he was appointed his successor in the chair of this University. Here he remained until 1828; and from that period, until

* Now in the class of 1809, on the roll of our honored sister, to the name of Jacobus Buchanan, will soon be added *Rerumpublicarum fœderatarum Præses*; the first President of the United States from the old Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, but not, we may hope, the last.

his death, in 1849, he devoted himself entirely to practical farming, for which he had all his life manifested a great partiality.

Professor Thomson had been trained in an excellent school. His father was a Scotchman, as were also Dr. Nisbet and Mr. Davidson, by whose example and precepts his habits and principles as an instructor were formed. He most carefully insisted upon an accurate knowledge of the grammatical structure of the languages, while, at the same time, he did not neglect in his prelections to lead the mind of the student to a discernment and relish of the beauties of the chaste models of poetry, history and eloquence, which, in turn, became the text books of his recitation-room. Beyond question, it is in the slow, patient and constant exercise of the power of discrimination in analysis—in the consequent improvement of the most important of the mental faculties, the judgment—and in the formation of habits of concentrated and steady attention, that classical studies are most useful to the youthful intellect. While the memory is not over-burdened, every lesson tends to the gradual developement of the intellectual strength. It is true, that attention to grammatical and prosodical niceties may be carried to excess. This seems to be the rage at present in the literary institutions of England. But the other extreme is also to be equally avoided. Hence, it is not good policy to run over in a cursory

manner a large number of different authors. It is not the way to make either an accurate or a ready scholar, nor to form a true taste. The maxim, *multum sed non multa*, applies with peculiar force; and such was the leading feature in Professor Thomson's course. The recitation was short, but he exacted a perfect knowledge of it in every student. Pages could not express a higher eulogium upon him as a teacher of the true old stamp.

Professor Thomson's notions of discipline were rigid. Within the college walls his manner was stern and distant; beyond them, it was kind and genial. It may be truly said of him, that

If severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault.

No portrait or even outline of his personal appearance, that I am aware of, remains; but no one, who ever saw him, can fail to recall his strongly marked and prominent features, his erect posture, and the almost military precision of his gait.

Robert M. Patterson, M. D., the Vice Provost, and Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, was a man whose name and fame are so familiar to all who hear me, that it is unnecessary to attempt on this occasion any general sketch of his life. It has already been done, and presented to the public from the pens of those who, from long intimacy,

were best able to perform the task.* Dr. Patterson was the son of a former Professor of Mathematics, who illustrated this University, and the country of his adoption, by high scientific attainments, and by a public life of varied and active usefulness. His no less distinguished son followed so closely in his steps, occupying the same honorable and responsible offices of Professor, Director of the Mint of the United States, and President of the American Philosophical Society, that their lives seem to present a most remarkable parallel. Dr. Patterson was an inmate of the University from his earliest years; his father having had his dwelling in a part of that old and capacious structure, which formerly stood on this spot, and which was erected at the expense of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for the residence of the Chief Magistrate of the Union, when it was hoped that Philadelphia might permanently be established as the Federal City. He graduated here, in 1804, after having passed through the Grammar School and the Department of Arts, and some years later received his diploma as Doctor of Medicine from our Medical School. Thus his entire training was within our pomœria; he was emphatically a child of this Institution. His reputation

* I refer particularly to "A Short Biography of Robert M. Patterson, M. D., by Samuel Breck, President of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind," and "An Obituary Notice of Dr. Patterson, read before the American Philosophical Society, by the Hon. John K. Kane."

belongs to us; and it is such as well to be a source of just pride to all who have a share in the honors of our Alma Mater.

He was Professor from 1812 to 1828; and it is in that capacity we are now to consider him. Although it may have the appearance of exaggeration, yet, in truth, it is scarcely such to say that he was the idol of the college. It may well be doubted whether there ever was in any institution of learning a more popular Professor. With a high order of intellect, an enthusiastic fondness for the studies of the chair he filled, and most attractive qualities as a lecturer and experimenter, he united, at the same time, urbanity of manners with strictness of discipline. He thus secured, that which it is difficult to gain at the same time, the attachment, confidence and respect of the young men, who formed his classes. In his recitation-room the wildest and most unruly spirits were under willing restraint. A sad but gentle look from him, evincing his displeasure, was the most severe and effectual rebuke. Indeed, he rarely had occasion to administer any other. He could have commanded the ready services of every youth in the college for whatever he asked. It is an uncommon quality—such a power over the wills of others, especially when exerted successfully on the buoyant and inconsiderate spirits of the young. No small part of that influence, in the case of Dr. Patterson, is undoubtedly to be attributed to the

natural blending of dignity and ease in all his intercourse with those around him. The students were treated with all the politeness and respect due to those who had fully attained to manhood. It was a marked illustration of how much manners contribute to the character and position which men attain and enjoy. That true politeness, which does not consist mainly in the graces of the person, but is the natural expression of a heart-felt desire that those with whom we converse, should be pleased and happy, is a powerful magnet, which never fails to draw friends and admirers. It may be termed the minor morals; but it springs from the greater morals—the power of self-control—a proper, and, therefore, an humbling sense of one's own deficiencies. He who really thinks more of what he is not, and what he might and ought to be, than of what he is, can hardly fail to possess good manners, though he may be ignorant of the rules of artificial etiquette, and be wanting in the polish which intercourse with refined society gives; things not to be despised, indeed, but not equal in value to the former. Freshmen and sophomores are hardly upon the dividing line, between boyhood and manhood; juniors and seniors flatter themselves that they have passed it. The more jealous are the younger classes; and there is nothing so grateful to human nature as a concession upon those points of which we feel not quite sure. A professor's position with the student,

depends more upon his first two, than his last two years. It is during that time, if ever, he has to gain his respect and confidence.

Dr. Patterson had a very active, vigorous mind. It was plain to all who attended his lectures and recitations, that he was himself constantly making progress. He communicated his instructions more in the spirit of an inquirer himself, than in the dogmatic *ex cathedra* style of one who knew all that was to be known. He watched with evident interest the progress of each student; and it was his great aim to excite an interest in the exercises of his class-room, by pointing out and illustrating their practical bearing upon the arts and business of life.

The Rev. Frederic Beasley, D.D., the Provost and Professor of Belles Lettres and Moral Philosophy, was a divine of the Protestant Episcopal Church. His birth place and early home was Edenton, North Carolina. He graduated at the College of New Jersey, while that institution was under the presidency of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith, one of the most distinguished men in his profession, which this country has ever produced. Dr. Smith's Lectures on Moral and Political Philosophy, on the Evidences of Christianity, his Essay on the Causes of the Variety of the Complexion and Figure in the Human Species, and two volumes of Sermons, are still regarded by scholars as monuments of a cultivated taste, sound learning and genuine piety. It

may be observed in passing, that Dr. Smith's Moral and Political Philosophy, was the text book on that subject used during Dr. Beasley's incumbency of the chair in this University. A sounder or better book for the purpose, in my judgment, has yet to appear. It repudiates the Utilitarian theory, and insists that there is an essential distinction between right and wrong, not dependent upon the will of any being, but founded in the nature of things, and growing out of the necessary moral relations of the rational creation. "Although I reject," says he, "the abstract principle, that the excellence of virtue consists in its conformity to the will of the Creator, or that His will alone *constitutes* its excellence; yet, wherever His will is clearly indicated, whether in the structure of the universe, and the order of Providence, or in the constitution of our own nature, and the relations which He has established between us and other beings, it must, from His infinite wisdom and goodness, be the surest rule of duty to us." The student of that book will have no difficulty in recognizing, that the Bible, as the revealed will of God, was received by Dr. Smith, as the surest evidence of what was right and wrong, and that he submitted his reason implicitly to its teachings on all such topics. In this respect it differs materially from some late works of wide reputation and reception, which, professing, indeed, to be systems of ethics, founded upon Christianity, are found, when ex-

amined, to be really systems of Christianity founded on or tortured into conformity to the authors' theories on morals.

As his college mates, Dr. Beasley was associated with Bishop Hobart, with Gaston, Mercer, and the eloquent and lamented Kollock, "equally," to use his own words, "the ornaments of the bar, the pulpit, and the deliberative councils of the nation." He survived all these early friends, with whom he continued to correspond as long as they lived; and it is an affecting incident that, in his last illness, he was observed, during the hours of slumber, to repeat the name of Hobart, as though his mind reverted, most naturally and delightfully, to the scenes and associations of his college years. Soon after receiving his first degree, he was elected to a tutorship in the college. He was ordained a deacon in 1801, and took charge of a parish at Elizabethtown, New Jersey. In 1803, he removed to St. Peter's Church, Albany, and subsequently became co-rector with the Rev. Dr. Ben, of Christ Church, in Baltimore. From this post he was called to the Provostship of this University, in 1815, in which he continued until 1828. He was then elected the rector of St. Michael's Church, Trenton. From this place, in 1836, he removed to Elizabethtown, and, under the pressure of age and the bodily infirmities of a constitution, which was never strong, sought quiet and retirement on the spot where he had begun his

professional career; and where he had formed that domestic relation which was nearest his heart, and formed the solace of his life. Here in sweet serenity, from the enjoyment of a good hope, he peacefully fell asleep, November 1, 1845.

Dr. Beasley was an accomplished scholar. His learning as a divine was evinced by several able controversial treatises, and his taste in criticism by contributions to the periodical literature of the day.* To Mental Philosophy, however, he especially devoted his attention, and in 1822, gave to the world as the matured result of his studies, a volume entitled, "A Search of Truth in the Science of the Human Mind." The principal aim and scope of this work, was to vindicate Mr. Locke from the charge

* An article from his pen in the first number of the American Quarterly Review, "on the Eulogies of Jefferson and Adams," may be referred to as an illustration of his abilities in criticism. "For several months during his residence in Elizabethtown, he was closely occupied in preparing a series of papers relating to the painful controversy, which has for several years distracted the Church, with regard to the peculiarities of the Oxford divinity. Believing, as he did, that free and full discussion is the great safeguard of truth, and believing, too, that essential and dangerous errors were connected with that system, he felt himself called upon, as one of the oldest presbyters of the Church, to express his opinion upon the important subject. He entered, as he had done in other cases, into a full discussion of the points at issue, and with his usual vigor and vivacity. His productions upon this subject have been favorably received by many, not only in this country but also in England, and they have been particularly noticed in the Christian Observer, one of the oldest and best established periodicals of the Church in that country, as evincing much ability and research upon the topics involved in that controversy." Funeral sermon by the Rev. Richard Channing Moore, Rector of St. John's Church, Elizabethtown, Nov. 4th, 1845.

of having taught what was then commonly termed the Ideal Theory: a theory which rested upon the hypothesis that whatever the mind takes notice of in perception is an image or representation of outward objects—that every object of thought is but an impression or idea, a faint copy of some preceding impression. Assuming this hypothesis as correct, Berkeley, the celebrated Bishop of Cloyne, logically and ingeniously deduced the conclusion that we have no certain evidence of the existence of an outward universe—that indeed we can absolutely know nothing, but the fact of the existence of these ideas and impressions and of the sensible subject perceiving them. Mr. Hume boldly proceeded a step further; and on the same premises built a system of universal scepticism, denying all evidence of the existence of the mind itself, and affirming that what we call such is really nothing but a succession of impressions and ideas, and that cause and effect are but names for an invariable antecedence and sequence, any necessary connexion between which we have no sufficient grounds to infer. These conclusions aroused at the same time Dr. Thomas Reid, the founder of the Scottish School of Metaphysics, and the celebrated Immanuel Kant, the father of transcendentalism. They took very different modes of combating the hypothesis in question; the one by appealing to certain fundamental principles of human belief, resting on the common sense of mankind: the

other by an effort to prove that there exists knowledge *a priori*, not deduced from sensation or reflection, but by the criticism of Pure Reason. Kant's reasoning, however, tended to a subjective instead of an objective idealism. According to him the mind imposes its own laws on the material universe. Space, time, cause and effect, are not in the universe itself, but merely in the mind, and are therefore but the forms or categories of knowledge. It was long, however, before the writings of the transcendental school attracted the attention of philosophers in England or this country. Dr. Beasley contented himself with showing, in opposition to Dr. Reid, that while Mr. Locke certainly traced the origin of all our knowledge to sensation and reflection, he nowhere taught that the perceptions of the mind are merely ideas, images or representations of outward things; but that, on the contrary, while admitting that the mode of perception is an unfathomable mystery, he held that external objects produce ideas or notions of them through the instrumentality of the senses, and expressly repudiated the doctrine that we have no sufficient evidence of the existence of a material universe.

It is curious to observe that Reid and his followers battled only with the hypothesis that the ideas, which are the objects of the understanding when a man thinks, are things numerically different both from the object existing and the subject perceiving.

They had no conception of the doctrine of the modern ideal system, founded upon the principles of Kant, in which a representative object is allowed, but only as a modification of the mind itself: a theory which has landed its author and his followers in a refined and imaginative pantheism. "The most consistent scheme of idealism," says Sir William Hamilton, "known in the history of philosophy is that of Fichte; and Fichte's idealism is founded on a basis, which excludes that rude hypothesis of ideas, on which alone Reid imagined that any doctrine of idealism would possibly be established.*

It may be doubted whether the study of the writers of the German school, or the more specious but equally dangerous positive philosophy now popular in France, would have shaken Dr. Beasley's confidence in the great English metaphysician. At all events, the Essay on the Human Understanding continued to the last to be his text book in mental science; for he considered that an original work by a

* M. Cousin has observed, with as much truth as point, *le Nihilisme devrait être le dernier mot de la Critique de la Raison pure*. It is said that Kant's last words on his death bed were "All is dark." The earnest student of this voluminous school, and even of Kant himself, will often ask himself the question, whether the writers understood themselves. They appear like an adventurous diver, who boldly essaying his strength and skill in some deep unfathomed pool, suddenly finds himself buried head and neck in the mud of the bottom, and in his struggles to extricate himself, disturbs the whole current, and makes what was before pellucid, dark and troubled. Well has Sir James McIntosh remarked that the mind never impinges upon the limits of human knowledge without being made sensible of it by the shock of the rebound.

great thinker is a more suitable institute than any mere compend for the use of schools and colleges, however well got up according to modern notions.

Dr. Beasley was of a kind and gentle disposition, that erred, if there was error, in too great indulgence to the follies and waywardness of youth. It was not in his nature to be a disciplinarian. He had studied books and studied himself, and he judged of other men by his own heart—the worst standard of judgment, perhaps, which any man good or bad can adopt. He was earnest and faithful as a teacher, and I believe successful, in inspiring a love for the chaste and manly, in preference to the gaudy and meretricious in writing, and in exciting an admiration for all that is honorable and high-minded in moral sentiment and purpose.

It is a perfectly just observation that the great art of instruction lies not so much in communicating knowledge, as in teaching young men how to study, and exciting them to love to study. The main object is to make students. This was the principle upon which these men, to whose memory I have been permitted to pay this humble tribute, acted. They had themselves been educated under the old system, and were not ambitious of striking out into any new untrodden paths. With them it was a guiding maxim, *via trita, via tuta*. They were emphatically opposed to what is commonly termed *cramming*. They did not believe that all the knowledge a young man was

ever to acquire, he was to acquire in their lecture rooms. They regarded the college as a training place, where education is rather to begin than to end: where, at all events, self-education is to begin.

That such ought to be the principles of collegiate education, will probably be admitted on all hands: yet it is to be feared that the outside pressure of more popular institutions is fast driving our colleges to an abandonment of this old and tried system. They multiply the number of professors and include in their curriculum as great a variety of different branches of knowledge as can possibly be crowded into the term of four years. It may be depended upon, however, as a certain truth, paradoxical though it seem, that it is a greater error to undertake to teach too much than too little. The inevitable tendency is to confuse, oppress, and weaken, instead of strengthening and maturing the mental faculties.

Education is not a process by which the memory is to be stocked with facts, subjects, and opinions, upon the notion that whatever is put there, will remain to be brought out on occasion whenever it may be needed. The mind is not a cabinet secretary, where knowledge, like papers, can be filed away in appropriate pigeon-holes: the business of the professor being to supply the materials, and that of the pupils to observe and remember, if he can, their marks and numbers, so as to know where to find them, when they are wanted for use. There are courses of

education often gravely propounded, worthy a place in the voyage to Laputa—it is to be hoped that the practice does not accord with the prospectus. The mind is a delicate organism. It takes time to expand and grow. Its full maturity is attained only by slow and gradual increments. The real question, then, is not how far it may possibly be pressed by gorging, but what is the kind and quality of that nutriment and exercise, which is best adapted to promote its vigorous and healthy growth.

This one question shows how important are the functions of those who train the youthful intellect. There are, however, other considerations, the suggestion of which may, perhaps, serve to impress us with the responsibility and therefore real honor and dignity of that profession, which devotes itself, often with remarkable self-denial of other more shining and lucrative paths, to the business of instruction.

As some of the purest pleasures, which are permitted to the lot of humanity, so some of the most important consequences for weal or woe flow from the associations of early life. There is a pride in the character of those, who have borne to us the relation of parents and teachers, against which it is in vain to argue, as founded on what we have not accomplished ourselves, and forming no part of the true merit, which we can claim as our own. It is a just pride; for we have a part in their merit as they have in ours. A man is honored in his ancestors as much as he is in

his descendants. We receive and reflect character. The influence, which such considerations exert on the intellect and heart, in directing the pursuits and moulding the principles, can hardly be fully estimated. It is not merely the force of early indoctrination, which has led the majority of mankind to adopt certain dogmas, or follow certain rites as most approved. Honest, sincere men change the religious opinions in which they have been educated, very rarely: and when they do, it is the triumph of judgment over feeling, succeeding a strong, and often a long struggle. With the mass, it is the Church of their Fathers they choose to worship in, because it is the Church of their Fathers. They examine and persuade themselves that they do so with entire impartiality: but let them at once frankly acknowledge the eloquence of the advocate at the door of their hearts, who pleads in favor of that worn path, in which their parents and those whom they loved, have trod before them. It would be unjust to call this feeling, prejudice. It is a loving faith which gently influences, warms and animates—leads, but does not force. It adds the beauty of sentiment to the force of reason. It fringes the edges of our opinions with skirts of golden lustre, as the rays of the setting sun play upon the clouds of the horizon. Hence, a new force is imparted to motives, which exercise the most general and powerful influence upon the opinions and actions of men. They form the great excitements to indus-

try—the spurs of honorable ambition—the alleviations of self-denial and sacrifice.

Philosophise if you can upon the origin of that wonderful feeling, implanted in every bosom, of love to country. It is an ultimate fact in our constitution. It is not to be accounted for by reason, or maintained by argument. Dr. Adam Smith has remarked, that “after all that has been said of the levity and inconstancy of human nature, it appears evidently from experience, that a man is, of all sorts of luggage, the most difficult to be transported.” There are ties, which bind him to the very spot where he was born—to the neighborhood where he spent his youthful days, and still stronger to the country, with whose history and honors he has associated himself. It requires an overruling sense of duty or interest, approaching almost to necessity, to induce him to break these bonds and adopt permanently the name and fortunes of another State. The law has recognised this principle of our nature in the well established rule that the domicil of birth easily reverts. Observe too how remarkably all our feelings and opinions are modified and moulded by the circumstances of our country. Pass the narrow channel, which separates England from her ancient and until lately inveterate foe: how marked the difference with which whole communities of men look at and judge of the same things, the same events, the same persons! All will not be found willing to

admit the justice of the political watch-word, "Our Country, right or wrong!" few men are ready to acknowledge that their country ever was or is in the wrong.

Let a man, amid the cares and bustle of life, revisit for a short season the home of his boyhood. He is of a nature not to be envied, if it yields him not a pleasure of the purest character. He recalls, by association, incidents in early life, mellowed by the slow and gentle touches of time, and endeared to him by their relation to those whom he loved and revered. Images are revived, which, though faded, have never been lost; for they were originally engraved upon memory's most enduring tablet—the heart. It is a merciful constitution that we remember best the things and persons we have loved. *Est autem situm in nobis, ut et adversa quasi perpetua oblivione obruamus, et secunda jucunde et suaviter meminerimus.*

Is there no final cause of this great general law of our active, intellectual, moral nature? No end of a wise and beneficent Providence, in implanting so admirable a motive power—so gentle—so constant, yet so mighty: which performs a part like the ebb and flow of the tide, showing only the advancing and receding ripples on the ocean's shore—yet more powerful in its influences than the wildest tempest or tornado, that ever lashed its waves to fury, and engulphed whole navies in its depths?

There is one, perhaps among many others, one important final cause of this principle—its bearing upon education. It elevates instruction to the most important and dignified office in the community, to consider the effect of early associations upon the intellectual and moral character. It would be difficult to calculate, with any thing like precision, in any particular case, how much of the moulding of opinions habits and principles is to be traced to this source. There are facts enough however lying upon the surface of human experience to satisfy us that, in the aggregate, this principle plays, though it may be a slow and insensible, yet a most important part in the work of education.

Man is an imitative animal. Imitation begins with earliest childhood, and continues until mature manhood has fully stamped and hardened the impress of the character. Our first imitation is of external manners and conduct; but an inferior mind cannot long be in contact with one superior, without, from the force of imitation, acquiring something of its habits and opinions. The processes of thought and feeling have the power of transfusing themselves from mind to mind. When we look up with veneration and love to a man, our confessed superior in age and knowledge, we take his opinions upon trust—we assimilate our habits of thought, as well as manner of expression to his. We often see how naturally men fall into the peculiarities of language

and manners of those with whom they frequently converse. The same thing is observable of habits of thought and principles of conduct. It is true of mature minds. The strong influence the weak. Much more is it true of the youthful mind in contact with the mature.

It has been well said, by Bishop Warburton, that “was the full definition of man a good philosopher, and his only business speculative truth, something might be said in favor of preserving his mind a *rasa tabula*, till he was himself able to judge what was fit to be written on it. But as he was sent into the world to make a good citizen, in the observance of all the relations of civil social and domestic life, as he was born for practice and not for speculation, I should think that virtues so necessary for the discharge of those relations could not be insinuated too soon or impressed too frequently; even though the consequence might happen to be the acquiring an obstinate and unconquerable prejudice in favor of religion.”

On account of that ultimate fact in the constitution of our nature, to which attention has been drawn, it will easily be inferred that it is a practical impossibility to preserve the mind a *rasa tabula*. Unless the subject be imprisoned in a dungeon, where it may be conjectured it would remain forever a hopeless blank, things must be written on it—few or many—good or bad. If few, the deeper and more

abiding the gravure ; if few and bad, the more potent for mischief. *Et hæc ipsa magis pertinaciter hærent, quæ deteriora sunt.*

But even if it were possible, through the processes of intellectual culture, to preserve the mind, as far as moral and religious principles are concerned, as a piece of white paper, until the period arrives for the subject to form his own, the natural tendency of our fallen nature to evil would render it more than probable that the choice would not then be an unbiassed one—would not be the result of a pure, uncorrupted exercise of reason. Living up to this period without moral and religious checks, without the restraint of fear of future retribution, the subject of such an experiment would most probably prefer to live on in a condition so congenial to the natural bent of his inclinations. Our opinions upon abstract questions are constantly influenced, and moulded by our hopes and wishes. The idea, that men become bigots by early religious training, is a bug-bear, which experience has stripped of its terrors. Suppose the result to be a strong attachment to particular tenets in faith—nay, suppose that opinions, early inculcated and long cherished, have acquired a complete mastery over the mind—it follows not that justice and charity may not go hand in hand with them. On the contrary, what more dangerous, in its practical moral results on life and conduct, than indifference to truth, which has led to the adoption

of the opinion, that his creed cannot be wrong whose life is in the right: a maxim about as sound as would be this, that his opinions in architecture cannot be wrong who builds good houses, without stopping to enquire whether he builds according to his own principles or those of others.

The most obvious and at the same time the most important difference in the intellectual constitution of different men, consists in their mental activity or sluggishness. These qualities attach themselves early in life, and most generally adhere where they have once attached. There are men who, with a holy zeal, like that of the Apostle of the Gentiles, through a long life, "count not themselves to have attained." Every sensible access of reputation and standing, is but vantage ground in their progress, from which they still reach upward and onward—like Cæsar, as Lucan describes him;

"Sed non in Cæsare tantum,
Nomen erat, nec fama ducis: sed nescia virtus
Stare loco."

In the formation of such a character, early training has much to do. It is unnecessary to take the position, that there is no natural difference in the mental powers of different men—that some are not naturally more active and vigorous than others. A slight consideration of the plastic power of habit on the physical frame will, by that analogy, which prevails

between the laws of mind and matter, sufficiently evince its power over the intellect. Activity of mind is as often a habit as a natural gift. A distinguished jurist and writer of our country, William Wirt, in a letter of advice to a young friend pursuing his studies, recommended him, by all means, to seize the moment of excited curiosity, upon any subject, to investigate it thoroughly. A more important and difficult problem remains behind, how to excite and keep alive this curiosity. To be able to solve this problem, may be considered as the key to distinguished success in the profession of instruction. Dr. Reid playfully expressed the opinion, that there ought to be two professors for every chair in the University—one for the students of lively parts, and another for the dunces. It is not to be doubted, that much the ablest professor would be required for the class of dunces. It would demand a man of more vigorous and active mind to afford any hope of success. It is evident, that to understand the secret of arousing and keeping alive that curiosity, which is so necessary in the training of the youthful intellect, the instructor must himself possess it in a high degree. He must himself be daily making progress, if he expects to transfuse such a spirit into his pupils. “Philosophy,” says Dr. Thomas Brown, “is not the mere *passive possession* of knowledge: it is in a much more important respect, the active exercise of acquiring it. We may truly apply to it what Pascal

says of the conduct of life in general. "We think," says he, "that we are seeking *repose*, and all which we are seeking is *agitation*."

Nor does the importance of activity rest in the acquisition of knowledge, the culture and improvement of the mental powers. The man of active mind will be, in general, the man of active life. To be a scholar for the mere sake of the enjoyment it affords is but the consecration of a refined selfishness. Nay, if the end of reputation be regarded, it is only a more adorned and meretricious kind of the same meanness. Self is so natural a god of the human heart, that its idolatry is the most easily transfused by imitation. To live in the happiness of those around us—in the prosperity of the community to which we belong—in the wealth and glory of our country—in the advance of knowledge virtue and religion in the world, are high ends, worthy to be inculcated as well by example as precept. It is true, that there is a most intimate connexion between the active exercise of the social virtues and the happiness of the individual. But virtue, in its purest truest sense, cannot be where self is the supreme end of life. It is not every man, who can be a great man; but to have the qualities of true greatness may be within the reach of every one. It requires great events, great revolutions, and the circumstances of birth and position in the midst of them, to attract the world's attention and secure

a place on the historic page. We have all our several parts of life allotted to us. Yet the active virtues shine in all of them. They diffuse a gentle and happy radiance around our path, and give to life the interest of a high and worthy aim. "If I had two lives," said Sir William Jones, who accomplished so much in so short a life, "I should scarcely find time for the due execution of all the public and private projects, which I have in mind."

Much is in the power of the instructor in infusing this spirit of activity, in setting a high standard of moral and intellectual attainment as the goal before his pupils. The seeds of high purposes may be planted earlier in life than we are often disposed to think. In all the frolic and buoyancy of boyhood, there is many a serious thought on the future; many a youth has shed a tear of generous feeling, as did the young Thucydides, when he saw the aged Herodotus crowned with laurels amid the plaudits of assembled Greece.

These considerations have been presented to enforce and illustrate the dignity of the profession of instruction. Stress has not been laid so much on the imparting of knowledge and the cultivation of taste, as on the formation of active habits of thought and study, and of sound and elevated principles of moral conduct. In these respects mind everywhere exerts its influence. Some giant intellect will often leave its mark upon the mind of many generations.

Men arise from time, to time, who wield a mighty sway over the opinions and actions of their contemporaries. These are, however, but the flutists of the columns—the carvers of the capitals and architraves. *Operum fastigia spectantur, latent fundamenta.* Those who dig out and lay the broad and massive foundation stones—a work that is then covered up and hid from sight, but upon which the whole superstructure of society rests—are parents and teachers. The earnest and conscientious parent exerts his power over but few subjects. The narrowness of his sphere of action is compensated by its augmented force and efficiency. Happy indeed is that community where the sense of parental responsibility for the character and conduct of children is most deeply felt. Every institution of Church or State which tends to weaken this sense of responsibility is perilous in the extreme. Equally dangerous is it to impair the sense of obligation of the child to the parent for the benefits of his education. Self-denial and personal sacrifice on the part of the parent naturally heighten this sense of obligation. The effects of loosening the bands of this relation may not be immediately noticed—the harvest of insubordination lawlessness and impiety may not be fully reaped by society for many generations; but come it will, sooner or later. The most remarkable people the world has ever produced have been those who have been carefully instructed at the firesides of

their parents—who have listened to words of counsel and wisdom, adapted to their years, from lips, to which they have been taught to look up with mingled veneration and love. In a somewhat wider, though not so near and therefore not so effective a sphere of action is placed the teacher. He is temporarily *in loco parentis*—brought in sufficiently close contact with the impressible mind of youth to make his influence of the most potent character. In schools or colleges, crowded with hundreds of young men, this influence is of course proportionably weakened. The teacher or professor is at too great a distance from the pupils. It may be seriously questioned whether such institutions are desirable in a country where the addition of private tuition cannot generally be afforded. The professor of a college, however, under ordinary circumstances, will send out from under his instruction, from five hundred to a thousand and upwards of young men, fitted by their education to fill the highest and most influential places in society. From these centres annually go forth the youth of our country; and according to the principles upon which they have been trained and the ability of the instructors, they will either be humble, earnest and patient students, or flippant, self-sufficient and superficial sciolists; they will be active, working, progressing men, or sluggish drones, or gay and thoughtless triflers: they will be sober, conservative, order-loving citizens, or they will set up to be wise

above what is written—ready to join the van of every movement, whose end is to agitate, to unsettle foundations, and disturb the elements of peaceful prosperity and progress. Upon the spirit and character of their collegiate course, it may, at least to a very large extent, depend whether they are launched forth to navigate the tempestuous sea of American life, left to frame their own charts, to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, or possessed of an abiding veneration and confidence in those charts to which their fathers looked for safety and direction.

One of these—the Bible—granted by the merciful will of the Creator to his erring creatures, as the standard of faith and morals, as sure as it is the work of Him, who made all things out of nothing and can reduce them again to nothing at his will, will stand unshaken, as a tall rock in the midst of all the surges of human opinion and theories, until that mighty angel with his right foot upon the sea and his left foot on the earth, shall lift his hand to heaven and swear that there shall be time no longer.

The other—the Constitution—placed in our hands by the pure and patriotic men, who laid the foundation of our Union of Republics, as the safe guide of political conduct and principle, is indeed but a human work, and we can but hope, even though it be against hope, that it may be perpetual.

It is related that when the members of the Convention, which formed the Federal Constitution, were

engaged in signing that memorable instrument in Carpenters' Hall in this city, now to our disgrace desecrated to the uses of an auction mart, Dr. Franklin, directing attention to a landscape behind the President's chair, observed, that painters had always found it difficult to distinguish between the rising and setting sun; that during the sessions of the Convention, he had often studied that picture, and doubted in his own mind, which it was intended to represent; but that now, when the great work for which they had met was happily finished, he saw plainly that it was indeed a rising sun, and accepted it as an auspicious omen of the future.

May we not be allowed to indulge the hope that the sun which then arose upon this highly favoured country, and now illuminates, while it warms and preserves, not thirteen, but thirty-one confederated States, may never go down until the sun in the firmament shall become black "as sackcloth of hair," and the heavens "depart as a scroll when it is rolled together."

Aug. 31, 1858

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